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INCENTIVES  
TO  
MENTAL CULTURE  
AMONG  
TEACHERS.

*Docce ut discas.*

'Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?'  
EPIST. TO THE ROMANS, II. 21.

BY

JAMES DAVIE BUTLER.

BOSTON:  
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## LECTURE.

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WHILE listening to the lecturers, who have so often, in these last days, fed us with the various food of sweetly uttered knowledge, I have said to myself more than once, "What shall the man do that cometh after the king?"\* Nor can I doubt but that those who assigned to us speakers the order of our appearance, revered the oriental custom, according to which, "Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine, and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse." Or perhaps as classical scholars, they may have imitated Prometheus, who began to make man of finer clay, as it were of porcelain, but lacking materials, was compelled to eke out his work with baser matter, at first intended for composing creatures of a lower race. My own apology for trespassing at all on your attention, now you have been feasted to the full, is, that after many who were rich had cast in much money into the Jewish temple-treasury, then, and not before, there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. Yet small as may be the *value* of the coin I contribute, its superscription, CULTURE, need not shrink from a comparison with the legend on guineas, napoleons, or double eagles.

Culture is clearly one great end of our being. God, indeed, "hath made all nations of men that

\* This lecture was the *last* in the course before the Institute.

they should seek the Lord."\* How shall they seek him? One answer to this question is, by doing good. But as the fountain must precede the stream, so he, who would do good, must first *be* good. And what is it to be good? Is it not to use our faculties as just views of their nature show they were intended to be used? Culture, then, moral, mental and physical, is one great purpose of our existence. I mention moral culture first, since it is not only our clearest duty, but is the best basis for all other culture; while physical culture alone would leave man a mere animal, and mental culture alone might only raise him to the bad eminence of the prince of Pandemonium. Holding, as I do, the laws of hygiene in such esteem, as to think sickness more often a fault, than a calamity, and persuaded, as I am, that the darkest day the land of the Puritan ever saw, was that, when the phrase New England Primer ceased to be synonymous with the Westminster Catechism, (since many of her children have been hence common-schooled out of earth as well as heaven,) I trust I shall not be thought neglectful either of the body or the soul, although in the present address, I say nothing more about them, but confine myself to the culture of the *mind*.

My subject, then, is, SOME OF THE INCENTIVES, WHICH SHOULD URGE TEACHERS TO MENTAL ADVANCEMENT. I seem to myself to follow a natural order of thought, by speaking first of those incentives, which appeal to teachers in common with other men, and afterwards, of such as address themselves peculiarly to teachers.

The ends of all our actions, so far as they respect ourselves, are two, Culture and Condition. It is better to aim at 'culture, for many reasons. Thus it is more in our POWER to gain culture. Who can be sure of riches, when not one man in ten thousand,

\* Acts xvii. 27.



even among calculating Yankees, ever became a millionaire; or of office, seeing the worthiest, and the wildest of statesmen, pronounced alike unavailable; or of popularity, now that men change their opinions as often and as willingly as their linen? External advancement is dependent on the favor of associates, or on accidents as unforeseen and surprising, as if there were no fixed laws of nature. Mental advancement is at the mercy of no fraudulent partner, no fall of stocks, no wind or weather. It is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are thus, or thus. He that will, may learn to read, and then, may so read as to investigate, and may then, by reflection, classify his facts, and by observation, illustrate his principles. Thus laboring, he secures culture. *Vives acquirit eundo*. In confirmation of this doctrine, I need cite no other proof-text than the fact, that there are no circumstances in which men, of the most enviable deportment, have not appeared, flashing out of thick darkness, as lightning out of the black cloud. If then, culture were of only equal value with condition, it would yet be more worthy of our pursuit, because it is more within our reach. If the delight afforded us in every swamp and pasture, by a modicum of botanical knowledge, be no greater than is forced upon an ignoramus, in the gardens of Louis XIV., it is still wiser to study botany, than to essay reaching the paradise of Versailles; because, we are more sure to succeed in the inward, than in the outward pilgrimage.

Again, mental advancement is more *our own*, than material. The one must be acquired, the other may be conferred. You take your father's outward estate according to law, but you would no more think of thus inheriting his inward wealth, than of assuming his military titles. In addition to this, outward resources are as hard to keep, as to get, so that to the wisest of men, they seemed always ready to take the wings of the eagle; but regarding internal

resources, it has always been proverbial,\* that they cannot be lost, that they bear transportation, remain in solitude, aye, when friends fall off; that they are not like porcelain and upholstery, at the mercy of moth and rust, or of fire and careless servants; that they solace sickness, infirmity and age.

Moreover, all men should labor for intellectual improvement, that they may thus become better fitted for their respective stations. To do aught well, still craves a kind of wit. Everywhere wisdom is profitable to direct, and labor that is educated, is more eligible, than that which is ignorant. Otherwise, veterans would not be superior to raw recruits, and master-workmen, to the youngest apprentices. But he, whose accomplishments are such, that he seems to bestow more honor on his station than he takes from it, promotes his own advancement. A good thing is soon snatched up. Men may say to him, go up higher, in his own calling; as David, having bravely fought a bear, was bidden to fight the Philistine giant; or, as one of our contemporaries, who began his literary course by teaching a district school for six winters, has been promoted, step by step, till he is now the President of the oldest, richest, and most influential University on this continent. Or the man of culture may be called, out of his own walk of life, into a wider field; as Franklin was called from his printing-press to stand before kings, and as John Stuart, the schoolmaster of king George the Third, was exalted as prime minister of the British empire. It is not, however, often that merit thus makes its way. Our President-making caucuses have, indeed, delighted to honor one man, whom no name but accident befits, another because he was unknown, and a third because he knew nothing

\* Nam cætera neque temporum sunt neque ætatum omnium neque locorum; hæc studia adolescentiam alunt, senectutem oblectant, secundas res ornant, adversis perfugium ac solatium præbent, delectant domi, nec impediunt foris, pernoscant nobiscum, peregrinantur, rusticantur. — *Cic. pro Archia*, vii.

of statesmanship. But what though ciphers, whom no position can make significant figures, hold offices they cannot fill, yet theirs is but the shadow of power; the substance belongs to men of mind behind the scenes, who mould the opinions and write the speeches of many a popular pageant, that neither speaks his own words, nor thinks his own thoughts.

“A thing of strings and wires by others played.”

Gibbon somewhere remarks, that almost all hereditary despots grow up so sensual and effeminate, as to be, in reality, the slaves of their own household slaves. This remark is only a generalization of the strong-minded Grecian philosopher's threat, when he was exposed for sale in the slave-market, that whoever bought him, would buy more than he bargained for, — not a slave, but a master.

Sometimes, also, power is accorded in form, as well as in fact, to those best able to sway its sceptre. I have seen a man, whose life had been spent in a shop or store, on a parade-day, dressed in the uniform of a military officer, with golden epaulets, and riding with great pomp. But when he neared the armed men, the thunder of the captains and the shouting, his war-horse, whose neck was clothed with thunder, and the glory of whose nostrils was terrible, as if smelling the battle afar off, pawed in the valley and swallowed the ground with fierceness and rage, till his affrighted and endangered rider resigned the stormy saddle to his horse-taming and more capable groom. Thus, in emergencies, the helm is given to the true pilot, and the Bucephalus of responsible station to him, who can guide that steed by skilfulness of hand. How many of Napoleon's marshals rose from the ranks!

It behooves every man to cultivate his mind, because he can in no other way *commune* with the sons of genius. This idea is a favorite with Schiller. For illustrations see his poems and ballads. Thus at

page 296, of Bulwer's translation, we read of the Antique at Paris :

“ By him alone the muses are possessed,  
Who warms them from the marble at his breast ;  
Bright to the Greek, from stone each goddess grew—  
Vandals, each goddess is but stone to you ! ”

Again, on page 315, the Italian Antique thus addresses a tourist from the North :

“ And o'er the river hast thou passed, and o'er the mighty sea,  
And o'er the Alps, the dizzy bridge hath borne thy steps to me ;  
To look all near upon the bloom my deathless beauty knows,  
And, face to face, to front the pomp whose fame through ages goes—  
Gaze on, and touch my relics now ! At last thou standest here,  
BUT ART THOU NEARER NOW TO ME, OR I TO THEE MORE NEAR ? ”

You may stand by their sides, give them dinners, print their books in gold, fill your houses with their fairy creations, rear them statues or mausoleums, garner up their autographs and relics, yet, without congenial culture, you are no nearer them, than if divided from them in space, by oceans, and continents, and in time, by millenniums ; you are infinitely further from them, than you might be even if thus divided. Your sympathies may be as imperfect with them, as were those of Ulysses, the earth-born, with Calypso, the celestial, when, as they sat at table, he ate beef and bread, while her food was ambrosia and nectar.\*

Who is the *owner* of the statue, that enchants the world, and of all the Florentine galleries ? Is it the thick-lipped, unappreciating Austrian duke, whose millions have bought, and whose bayonets guard them ? Give me rather that ownership of them, which belongs to those artists who seek them as Meccas of the mind ; to the Danish sculptor, who measures kingdoms with his feeble footsteps, that he may behold them ; and to the American painter, who works his passage over the mighty deep, to reach such shrines. That sculptor and painter have all

\* Odyssey, v. 199.

that is to be *desired* in these gems, and therefore may well be content to let the Austrian, or those that will, keep them, and be anxious about them.

“Doth the harmony  
That slumbers in the sweet lute-strings, belong,  
To the purchaser, who dull of ear doth keep  
The instrument? True, he hath bought the right  
To strike it into fragments, yet no art  
To wake it into silvery tones, and melt  
With bliss of thrilling song.”

Genuine excellence in all departments, must say to every one who has nothing akin to it, either in spirit, or at least in taste, (in the words of the rose, to that brute which the Jews counted the most unclean of all animals,) *Sus apage! haud tibi spiro.*

“Insensate swine, depart from me,  
No fragrance I exhale for thee.”

Furthermore, mental delights should commend themselves to every man as *nobler* than those of sense. The former we share with angels, the latter with brutes that graze the field or roam the wood. Who would live for epicurism, knowing that the most exquisite refinements of luxury, beds all of rose-leaves, snails fattened on strawberries, exaggerated geese-livers, and *Pâtés de foies gras*,\* become as tasteless to him that is used to them, as the plainest fare? Satisfied that the glutton's wish, to have a throat a mile long and every inch a palate, is not fulfilled to any man in our days, yes, that no man can eat two good dinners daily, who would prefer the evanescent delicacies of the table to

— “a perpetual feast  
Of nectared sweets where no crude surfeit reigns.”

In addition to these superiorities of culture, it has

\* “The Strasbourg goose is fixed near a great fire, with its feet nailed upon a plank, crammed with food, and deprived of drink; yet when he reflects that his liver, *bigger than himself*, will diffuse all over Europe the glory of his name, he resigns himself to his destiny and suffers not a tear to flow.”

claims on every man, inasmuch as it tends to establish a better *aristocracy* than the world has hitherto seen. There are still many aristocracies, or assumptions of superiority on false pretences, which yet need to be rebuked. One of these is ancestral pride, as if it were more credit to me to have had a great-grandfather, who did some great thing, than to have done that great thing myself; or as if, as we read in Blackstone,\* "Delicacy of sentiment were peculiar to those of noble birth." What a lack of genuine culture in Ireland, is argued by the fact, that Robert Boyle is there counted worthy of less abundant honor, because he was the father of experimental science, than because he was the son of the Earl of Cork!

Another sham aristocracy is that of *titles, vox et præterea nihil*.

"Words of learned length and thundering sound."

Daniel Webster, when required to write a letter from the President of our Union, ten years ago, to the Emperor of China, thus began, "I John Tyler, President of the United States of America, which States are, Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, Missouri, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan," &c. † In writing to a puerile potentate, it was doubtless wise to fetch about this form of speech. Yet how far is our intellectual monarch from such littleness, when he writes for himself, and to kindred, if not commensurate minds. In proportion as the substance of mental discipline increases, shall we cease to care for such semblance of it, as are afforded by a string of abbreviations following one's name, like the queue of braided hair, dangling down to the heels

\* Book i. p. 11.

† Works, vol. vi. p. 477.

of a Chinaman, and puzzling everybody but school-boys, fresh from their spelling-books. A correction is still needed for this puerility, though it has in a degree proved its own antidote; since universities have given titles to such as deserved them least, as if literally following the advice which Diogenes gave the Athenians, namely, that they should vote their asses, horses; and since many names of honor have become vulgarized, through being bestowed on the basest of men or beasts, as the high Roman name Patrician has degenerated into the Irish nickname, Paddy,\* and the conquered Sleswickers have made the dignified epithets of High Mightinesses, by which they are forced to address their Danish conquerors, ridiculous, by lavishing the same sounding nothings on the dogs in their streets.

Again, the aristocratic airs of some *politicians*, on the score of their being dressed in a little brief authority, would evaporate in a community tinged with liberal studies. Shall we vote into majesty the mantle of him, who owes his elevation to an availability, no whit more creditable to him than hereditary succession, or the accident of a lot, — who is a mouth-piece of any sentiments a majority may dictate, and who may be no more suited for his place than Caligula's horse was for the Roman consulship?

Mental advancement is demanded, to abate the pride of *dress, fashion and wealth*; for this aristocracy of the purse and vain show is our besetting sin. The sexton in one of our metropolitan churches is reported, (slanderously let us hope,) to ask all strangers who seek an occasional sitting in his church, whether they came thither in their own carriages; and to give only standing places to such, as came in hired vehicles, while he sends away altogether such, as are not too proud to tread the earth, as well as to till it. If more matrons were anxious for jewels *in* their

\* Gibbon, xxxvi. note 126.

heads, rather than *on* them, there would be fewer of the young misses, or those anxious to be thought young, who retire to solitude only to decorate themselves; whose toils are confined to their toilet amid the bravery of tinkling ornaments, caul, round tires like the moon, mufflers, wimples, crimping-pins, and changeable suits of apparel; and who are so hard to be drawn from this secret devotion, as to be tardy at every appointment. Were there more, both men and women, manifestly prizing inward adorning higher than outward, we might hope soon to see the last of dressy aristocrats; those ambulatory clothes-frames, whose chief end is to tie a cravat deftly; to wear such clothes as provoke us to say, How much better worth looking at are the things worn than the wearers; whose travels are the travels of trunks, which they go about to pack, unpack, re-pack, and be anxious about; whose whole lives are wasted in getting, — not always in paying for, — garments, in putting on garments, in talking about, ostentating, or asking pardon for garments; and at whose death, the only mourning, among men of like sense with themselves, will be, that they left so fine a wardrobe unworn. We shall have fewer youth, who, at their best estate, are altogether vanity, so soon as we have more men of full age, who, beholding the pomps and glories of material civilization, will sincerely say with Socrates, "How many things there are, which we do not want!" Had Dickens been more enamored of Socratic simplicity, he would never have written in his *American Notes*,\* "Not being able, in the absence of any change of clothes, to go to church, I was reluctantly obliged to forego the delight of hearing Dr. Channing."

But we need more of liberal study, chiefly as the antagonist of a *moneyed* aristocracy. Mammon is here prone to be adored with exclusive idolatry be-

\* Page 13.



cause we know no hereditary rank, and few great prizes in army, navy or church, as well as because we pretend to esteem titles, office and luxury more lightly than other men. But had we ten cities, which, like Leyden in Holland, would choose to have a university founded in them, rather than to enjoy a perpetual exemption from taxation, there would soon be an end of such taunts, as, that Americans never utter a sentence, which has not the word dollar in it, never see Niagara without calculating how many spindles it would turn, never meet a king without wishing to ask him the cost of his throne, never account any man a man of worth who is not worth something on 'change, and that without aid of clairvoyancer, our first and last thought may be known to be, how we can buy cheap and sell dear.

O for mental improvement so decisive and extended, as to clarify these corrupted currents of opinion, according to which,

“ Not a man, for being simply man,  
Hath any honor ; but honor for those honors  
That are without him ; as place, riches, favor,  
Prizes of accident as oft as merit.” \*

Besides such general considerations as we have seen to call all men to culture, certain others of *peculiar application to teachers*, deserve our earnest heed. The claim of culture on teachers on account of their being set under authority, and hence *responsible* for what they teach, is too hackneyed to bear being dwelt upon, and yet deserves a momentary notice. I wish this were a time to illustrate how indissolubly the destinies of masters and scholars are bound together, so that whatever woe, through the shortcomings of the master, falls upon the scholar, will rebound on *his* head from whom it came.

\* Troilus and Cressida, iii. 3.

One of the English kings provided for his little son, a playmate, called a *whipping-boy*,\* who was to play with the prince, help him in learning his lessons, and, if possible, persuade him to apply himself; but, who, when the royal scion failed in a recitation, was, evening by evening, vicariously flogged in his stead, and in his presence. What this whipping-boy was to the king's son, that are teachers to their pupils. If the members fail to learn, the head suffers with them, and as it were for their fault.

“*Quid quid delirant pueri plectuntur doctores.*” †

Again, teachers may well feel incentives to intellectual advancement, inasmuch as their *daily duties* may be *promotive* of such advancement. What is it to teach? It is to shine on the angles of a thought, till things which differ are distinguished,—to dignify the trivial, as rivers dignify their spring-heads,—to elucidate the obscure, like geometrical diagrams,—to simplify the difficult, as when a pair of compasses enable a child to draw a circle,—to freshen commonplaces, as when old coin is new-minted,—to beautify the repulsive, as parables embroider the gospels,—and thus to fasten truth in each pupil's mind in as sure a place, as men fasten, what they hear said in praise of themselves, or in dispraise of their neighbors. Thus to teach is a *work*, and, like other work, is the mother of vigor. “To work,” cries Carlyle, “what incalculable sources of cultivation lie in that process, in that attempt! How it lays hold on the whole man: not of a small, theoretical, calculating fraction of him, but of the whole, practical, daring, doing, enduring man, thereby to awaken dormant energies, root out old errors at every step. He that has done nothing, has known nothing.”

Yet few occupations are so good a mental discipline as teaching, for few are so suited to detect a man's deficiencies in respect to exactness, informa-

\* *Fortunes of Nigel*, i. 101.

† Horace, *Epist.* i. 14.

tion, attention, readiness and expression, as well as to make them stare him in the face. When you thus become conscious of *one* error, can you fail to suspect yourself of *more*, and to give all diligence lest you be a blind leader of the blind? When, through lack of investigation, you have drawn on fancy for a fact, will you not be ashamed still to have any need of thus mapping out a terra incognita, after the fashion of the old geographers, when they depicted central Africa? Surprised that your thoughts are more vagabond than any truant school-boy, do you feel no stimulus to that patient reflection, which wrought Newton's miracles? Are you always ready to answer a question, till you are asked, — and does knowledge then, like sleep, refuse to come at your call? Surely, you will cultivate that philosophical association, which will, by any link, draw you a whole chain; or you will so keep a commonplace book, that it shall be, to all you read, hear, or think, what a concordance is to the Bible. When you begin to speak, does your tongue falter, and are your thoughts hedged up? Then you will read through a dictionary to enrich your vocabulary, glean acceptable words from every book, exhaust the real world, and imagine an ideal world, for fresh and fitting images, to simplify, dignify, or adorn your ideas. Are your utterances such, that every something being blent together, turns to a wild of nothing? Then are you urged to seek, more than for silver, that lucid *order*, which turns a labyrinth into a plain path; that arrangement which will integrate the multitudinous fractions, you have learned, into one system even as cunning artificers taught the cedars of Lebanon, the stones of Tabor, and the gold of Ophir, — parts into parts reciprocally shot, — to harmonize, in perfecting the holy and beautiful house, on mount Zion.

Endeavors to make known, what he knows, not only thus stimulate the teacher to make up his

deficiencies in exactness, information, attention, readiness and expression, by causing these broken links in the golden chain of his culture to haunt him like ghosts, but they confer a blessing directly, even while they are being made. As they are to reflect the teacher's mind, they bring it to its best posture, as for a like reason, a mirror or painter brings the face of a fair lady; they stamp whatever he imparts, more deeply in his own memory, as rivers still wear their channels deeper. "Children," said Dr. Johnson, "should always be encouraged to tell to some brother, sister, or servant, what they hear,— and that immediately, before the impression is erased by the intervention of new occurrences." They clarify his knowledge, since,

"Thoughts disentangle passing o'er the lips,  
Speech spreads those beauteous images abroad  
Which else lie furled and clouded in the soul;  
Aye, speech, is morning to the mind."

Old familiar truths may become new to a teacher, because they are new to his pupils. Their new-born delight as knowledge dawns upon them, should, rejuvenate his superannuated emotions, as with morning freshness. Moreover, through the answers or questions of learners, new ideas, or hitherto undetected latencies of old ideas, flash upon the teacher's mind.

That the tendency of every instructor's daily path, is thus to be fruitful in suggestions, to quicken thought, to give alacrity to feeling, to reveal his weaknesses to himself, and rouse him to correct them, every schoolmaster, every mistress of an infant school, and every mother, who has taught an abecedarian at her knee, knows by experience. I am as far as any one, from asserting that this tendency has free course and becomes effect in a majority of teachers, for of not a few must we admit that,—

"As those fowls which live in water  
Are never wet, they do but smatter."\*

\* Hudibras, Part II. Canto 3, line 219.

But the very existence of such a tendency, is an incentive to intellectual progress. Did this tendency oftener have its perfect work, more of our teachers would be found worthy to be classed with the first of recent French grammarians,\* who, though a broker, was led to analyze grammatical principles, by educating, in his leisure hours, his own daughters; or with that Cicero of our senate, for whom we still pine with vain lamentings, who testified that the secret of his copious eloquence, was his daily habit of making known what he knew,—if not to men, women, and children, at least to horses and oxen, or even stumps and cornstalks; or with Luther, whose words are, “I am one of those, who have made progress by instructing others.” The practice of teaching being thus favorable to advancement, alas for those, who use this price to get wisdom, as abusing it! They would resemble the oriental star-gazers, if those wise men of the east, having been shown, even by their own daily calling, a star of hope and promise, had refused to yield themselves to its guidance.

A teacher's life facilitates his culture, not only from the nature of his daily duties, but *through its blending of occupation and leisure.*

His circumstances are more to be desired, than though he had nothing else to do than to grow in knowledge. Who is ignorant, that those, who have nothing to do, as a bounden duty, become do-nothings? Books are made by such as must write before breakfast, or after bed-time, on board steamers and rail-cars, by those, who make more of their gleanings, than other men make of their vintage,—as Cicero turned his *tempora subseciva* † to more account, than others, their solid days. The reason is, that a daily task is

\* Girault. Encyc. Am. Supplementary volume.

† Quantum ceteris ad festos dies ludorum celebrandos, quantum ad alias voluptates, et ad ipsam requiem animi et corporis conceditur temporum. — *Cic. pro Archia*, vi.

needed for inuring to habits of industry and exertion. Such habits more than compensate for the hours, which educational duties must subtract from a teacher's studious contemplations. They tend to keep him from idleness when school is over, even as the momentum a railroad car acquires will still propel it along the track, after it has been unshackled from the locomotive, or even directed to a divergent course. When, therefore, a teacher imagines, to himself, the wonders he would achieve, but for his six hours of daily toil, let him be sure, that he has mistaken a help, for a hindrance, — like the paper kite, which would break its fettering string, or like the ship, which would throw overboard its encumbering ballast.

Not only is the teacher thus invigorated by his labors, as are other men, but his leisure is *surer* and *better*, than that of most others. It is surer, because his work is not like the mechanic's, from sun to sun, — much less is it never finished, like the tasks of physicians, lawyers, and ministers. It is better, because it not only regularly recurs, and is not liable to be disturbed, but it finds him at the very door of science. He is, perforce, more at home in the elements of all knowledge, than other men are. But these elements, or the questions of pupils concerning them, prompt to further researches. They lead him, in the school-room, to reference-books, whenever the desiderated information is either too fragmentary to satisfy curiosity, or too extended to be mastered on the spot. Hence these elements, which some term beggarly — so few that a child may write them — are keys to doors great and effectual, narrow passages to broad saloons, staircases to swelling domes and airy pinnacles, or clues through the most labyrinthine mines of knowledge. Who will let these keys rust unused, throw away these clues, and refuse to enter the goodly land, which he day by day is led up to the top of Pisgah to behold? He has laid a fair and firm foundation, — will he be content to build thereon with hay and stubble?

Centuries ago a Russian czar inscribed on a guide-board at the southern gate of Moscow these words, "The road to Constantinople." That inscription has ever since turned the thoughts of a nation, towards the proud city whose name it bears. Let teachers but survey every principle, they make known to their scholars, as it were a finger-post, marking the road to desiderata beyond the horizon of their present knowledge, as mosques and minarets not yet seen ; let them but look upon their daily routine of duty, as gymnastics to nerve them with energy, and their daily leisure, as affording them opportunity for intellectual conquests, and their march will be as ceaseless, as the Muscovites towards the city of the Sultan, and their eyes shall feast on beauties, of which Bosphorus and all its harems cannot boast. If their flesh be not too weak, their spirits will be willing to adopt into their creed the German maxim, that one end of vacations is, that scholars may review old studies, but that their chief end is, to give teachers time to break ground in *new studies* — *studio fallente labore*.

If the teacher's vocation, his act of teaching, the branches he teaches, his confinement and freedom, tend together toward his intellectual good, we may well expect to see fruits of such a tendency as, since our school system has been so long in operation, are already manifest. Such fruits I think we witness, in the gradual but ceaseless amelioration of our primary schools, and yet more palpably in *the Yankee character*.

Where will you find a more plausible origin for the Yankee character—that glory, jest and riddle of the world—than in the school-house? That character was not known, before the district school came into being. It now prevails in its intensest form, only where such schools have longest flourished. That make of mind, counting action the best rest, keen as a razor, guessing as accurately as other men calculate, versatile, so as like a cat always to light on the feet, self-reliant as a ship of war, inventing more than others imagine, reducing to practice what others

demonstrate to be impracticable, bringing more to pass with a dull axe and a whittling jack-knife, than others with a chest of tools and a swashing broadsword, if not the highest style of man, is yet a higher style, than has ever been built out of so large a proportion of any community, as of Yankeedom, and is such a style of culture, as I have labored to show that a teacher's functions and position are suited to furnish forth. If we find an approach to this character among the canny Scotch,—who are said to be Yankees in great coats, as Yankees are said to be Scotchmen with their coats off,—we also find in their country an approach to our district schools. If, as Dr. Lyell observes, "Our school system is the most original product of the American mind," it cannot seem incredible, that the product should thus react on its producer, heightening its nationality, and developing the seeds, our fathers brought from beyond the sea, into the Yankee variety of the Anglo Saxon. Nor let it be thought that the Yankee cuteness is more than co-extensive with the ground I assign for it, namely, school-keeping. For who of us never taught a common school? Think you I would dare address you, teachers, had I never like you taught "the young idea how to *fire*." Who is a native-born Yankee, and yet can remember where he began in the nursery, among his earliest infantile sports, to *play* school? The occupation of our earliest schoolmaster, — the Apostle Eliot, — on his death-day, at the age of eighty, was to teach the alphabet to a child. On the whole, since the Yankee nation from first to last have figured as schoolmasters, I am persuaded that we ought to ascribe our Yankee nationality to our school-houses, as the rock whence it was hewn.

A teacher may find an incentive to make the most of *himself intellectually* in the present position and claims of his calling.

How far is the corps of educators now, from that in the old Roman empire, when common schools were



unthought of, or contemned,\* when private tutors, as well as physicians, were slaves, † and when Tacitus could find no stronger phrase to mark the obscurity of a certain informer, than saying that he had once taught a school. ‡ What a remove are we from those dark ages, in which writing was styled the clerical art, — *ars clericalis*; § as if chirography had been invented solely for the benefit of the clergy.

Our teachers have a better lot than the Scotch had, when Chalmers || was not counted worthy to eat with the children of the family in which he taught; or than the English have, if we may infer any thing from the solicitude most British biographers of Milton betray, to prove that that peerless poet could not have been guilty of keeping a school.\*\* I need not say that all our teachers are in a paradise, compared with the English governesses, who are outcasts from the ranks of both servants and masters, and run a gauntlet between them, buffeted by both; as the unhappy flying fish, an outcast from the heaven above and the ocean beneath, is the prey of dolphins in the water, or, if escaping their jaws, by darting into the air, becomes the victim of cormorants. How far is the teacher's post in America, better than in Austria, where it is required, so to vaccinate children with knowledge, that they will never take much of it; or in those Italian despotisms, where, when a forgery

\* *An tua demens*

*Vilibus in ludis dictari carmina malis?*

*Non ego.*

HORACE, Sat. i. 10, 75.

Alas for Horace? Little did he dream in what "vile schools" his poems would be thumbed and dog-eared.

† Gibbon, vol. i. page 26. ‡ *Annal.* iii. 66.

§ *Encyc. Am.* xi. 250.

|| *Living Age*, No. 320, p. 291.

\*\* "All his biographers are unwilling that Milton should be degraded to a schoolmaster; but since it cannot be denied that he taught boys, one finds out that he taught for nothing, and another that his only motive was zeal for the propagation of learning and virtue," &c. &c.—JOHNSON.

occurs, the priest says to the peasant, "All this comes of learning to write; I pray you avoid that black art."

But while the American teacher blesses himself that he lives in the nineteenth, and not in any former century, and here, not elsewhere, let him remember that his vocation, just because it now opens to him new joys and hopes, lays upon him new cares and burdens. The name *grammar* school, (which once signified an academy,) indicates that grammar was once deemed too high a branch for the children of the masses to meddle with; the town records of the last century show that it seems to have then been no disgrace for a public officer to spell more words wrong than right; and the school in the town where I reside, when Dr. Bowditch attended it, about seventy years ago, had in it but one book, and that a dictionary, out of which the pupils were daily taught to spell in chorus, never failing to close with the longest word in the vocabulary, namely, that endecasyllabic tongue-triever, *Honorificabilitudinitas*.\* No teacher is in danger of thinking, that those who bore the torch of learning in the days of such ignorance, had the motives to self-improvement which he has, but many teachers may be in danger of not seeing, how much they must still teach to themselves, that they may liquidate the debt due their calling. I am far indeed from supposing, that the master will not keep in advance of his scholars, however many new studies may be thrust, as by hydrostatic pressure, into the course of his pupils. I have more fears, that his curriculum will become to him commonplace, so that he will put his students through their studies, somewhat as transportation companies put through emigrants on the canal, and will himself beat and beat the beaten track, as listlessly as a hungry man would chew water, or go through all the manipulations of a Barmecides' feast,

\* Encyc. Amer. Supplementary volume. Article, *Bowditch*.

while all the knives and forks, plates and platters, were foodless and empty. Accordingly he must contemplate the simple things he teaches, from new stand-points, or in their higher relations. Nothing short of thus seeking the fountain-head and root, can impart perpetual verdure and bloom to those flowers of knowledge, which are all that his disciples can as yet appreciate.

In addition to quickening his own interest in his occupation, a teacher must study, that he may have a treasure in *reserve*, from which he can bring forth things new and old. If he has no such treasure, can he answer without evasion or delay, the questions of an inquisitive class? Needs he not to know much, not in class-books, that he may be able to supply their deficiencies, or heighten their adaptation to special cases and individual minds? If, as soon as some roguish urchin artfully throws him off the track, his train sticks fast as in the sand, will not all children, who know their right hand from their left, feel that his is a mechanical and not a resourceful mind? Children are not such fools, as we think them. They can judge of what they cannot execute, as they can tell whether a shoe pinches, and where it pinches, though they cannot make a shoe. They judge what fills the vase, by the drops which run over; they understand, though, perhaps, they have never heard them, such maxims as—"Wanting in the least, wanting in much," *Falsum in uno, Falsum in omnibus*.

If these remarks would have had any justness, when scholars were seated on benches, that would seem to have been devised for inquisitorial torture, and when they breathed a worse atmosphere, than had been known out of old wells, since the prophet Jonah was schooled, for three days and nights, in a pestilent congregation of fishy fumes, how much more penetrating may we expect to find the children of this generation, in school-houses, where the architecture, ventilation, finishing, furnishing, and whole *material* would do no discredit to a king's palace?

Yet what if a teacher's errors elude being detected by his school? Such a result cannot be so well for him, as ill for them. His fault escapes exposure, because it is mistaken for an excellence, and will surely be copied, more than all his excellences, as being easier to copy. Thus, like an ill-going town-clock, he may mislead a whole village.

On the other hand, a teacher of genuine culture, *totus teres atque rotundus*,—*factus ad unquem*, will, by no means, be, in his school, as a flower blushing unseen in the desert, or a gem in an unfathomed ocean-cave. His industry, enthusiasm, and still-baffled, but still-renewed endeavor, will waken responsive echoes in his pupils, though his circle be broader than theirs. Contagious virtue will go out of him.

Then he will be ever before them, as a cluster of Eshcol,—ripe; purple, gushing,—alluring them towards the land of learning, whence it came. Here was the secret of Arnold's success. He made scholars because *he* was a scholar. His tones, gestures, words, pronunciation, casual sayings, and classic taste, insensibly permeated and leavened the whole lump. Hence has his praise as a model-teacher, been with good reason hymned in your hearing, by a loftier harp than mine.\* The truth is, that whatever is set on a high place flows downward; as Pliny's doves in the Roman Capitol have been the pattern for numberless modern mosaics; as the East Room at Washington, affords a model for parlors from Maine to Oregon; and as Shakspeare's diction enriches the speech of legions, who never read one line of his writings. This re-action of a teacher's scholarship upon his scholars, must indeed be, to a great extent, indirect, and through eyes which catch in an instant, what the ear cannot learn in an hour. But without forgetting that the minds of children

\* The allusion is to a previous lecture in the course, by Joshua Bates, Jr., Esq., Principal of the Brimmer School, Boston.

are vials with narrow necks, the master, who is thoroughly imbued with knowledge, will soon discover, that they are able to receive more than he, if less assiduous as a student, would have been able to impart; while those he teaches, will feel that he is a tree, whose branches would not bend so lowly within their reach, if less heavily laden with fruit.

But if, in these times, a teacher cannot be too thoroughly furnished for his duties in school, still less can he be, for what I may call, his *out-door* duties. I say nothing of the calls that will be made on him, to solve the questions — often of impossible solution — which arise in his precinct, or to judge of books for a library, or to aid in debates, or to lecture at literary lyceums, but I must not pass in silence certain other demands which lie more in the line of his duty. Who, but he, is to separate the precious, from the vile, — educational improvements, from mere innovations? Such is the philanthropy of our contemporary compatriots, that more missionaries, than are scattered through the pagan world, may be found itinerating among our schools, each preaching his gospel, in the shape of a new school-book, or new *ology*, *ography*, or *osophy*. The misfortune is, that each new missionary snatches away the bread, left our children by his predecessor, before they have time to taste a morsel of it; so that, like Sancho Panza, for whom grave physicians interdicted this dish as too hearty, and that as too meagre, this as vegetable, and that as animal, one as too sweet, and another as too sour,\* they are ready to starve in the midst of plenty. It devolves on teachers, more than on any other class of men, to try these ministering spirits, of what sort they are. Teachers must seek the golden mean, where antagonistic ultraists border on the truth. They must set their faces against the *mystics*, that make books on the principle

\* Don Quixote, Part II. Chap. 47.

of the tailor, in Dean Swift's Lagado\*, who measured his customers by astronomical observations, and equally against the *simplicity-mongers*, who "blasting pupils with excess of light," are so bent on making all things easy, even to the lazy, that they commend the sluggard, who hearing that it was good for health to breathe the air of earth newly turned up by the plough, had his servant bring a fresh clod of it into his chamber every morning, and held his head over it, while he lay in his bed.† So is it theirs, to give a verdict on the much talked of claims of Phonetic science. They must tell us, whether it is only a euphemistic name for bad spelling, or whether it is a railroad, over what has always been "the great dismal swamp of childhood," or whether it is a *tertium quid* between the two, partly both, but wholly neither.

That instructors may thus be breakwaters, sheltering every ship that brings a freight worth having, but beating back the billows of quackery and humbug, full of sound and fury, yet signifying nothing, they must be rooted and grounded in knowledge.

Teachers now-a-days have a need of mental growth formerly unknown, that they may *pay* their *debt* to educational *literature*. Had every teacher made the most of his mind, I think we should have fewer school-books; but our educational authors would have been more exclusively practical educators,

\* "This operator did his office after a different manner from those of his trade in Europe. He first took my altitude by a quadrant, and then with rule and compasses, described the dimensions and outlines of my whole body, all which he entered upon paper; and in six days brought my clothes very ill-made, and quite out of shape, by happening to mistake a figure in the calculation. But my comfort was, that I observed such accidents very frequent, and little regarded."—*Works*, II. 153.

† "It is best to take the air of earth new turned up. I knew a great man that lived long, who had a clean clod of earth brought to him every morning as he sat in his bed: and he would hold his head over it a pretty good while."—*Bacon, Nat. History, Cent. x. § 928.*

and their books would have been so much better adapted to the needs of our pupils, that none could declare them, like the religion of Hudibras —

—————“intended  
“For nothing else but to be mended”\*

Were our teachers as studious as they might be, common-school periodicals would not drag out their existence like convicted felons with halters round their necks, and every month ready to be supended. They would become the most fresh and racy issue of our press, being reservoirs, to which sparkling springs, in every district, should yield, as living waters, its quota of original observation, experiment, or reflection. The appeal of books and papers, urging teachers to self-improvement, is seconded by this Institute, — our modern Olympic games — and others of a more local character. Such festivals are suited to be magnets, calling together from every quarter, and garnering up every fragment of educational suggestions; and not only this, but they should act on teachers like the Patent-office on mechanics, rousing them to witty yet practical inventions, which, when concentrated, as at this anniversary, shall not only gather crowds to behold them, but make outsiders, if they would teach you anything, appear as ridiculous as Phormio, who never set a squadron in the field, appeared, when he lectured to Hannibal, the victor of a hundred battles, on the art of war and the duties of a general.†

Teachers are called to self-culture, not only by educational literature, but as a safeguard against certain

\* I. i. 205.

† Quid enim aut arrogantius, aut loquacius fieri portuit, quam Hannibali, qui tot annos de imperio cum populo Romano omnium gentium victore certasset, Græcum hominem, qui nunquam castraviddisset, nunquam denique minimam partem ullius publici muneris attigisset, præcepta de imperatoris officio et de re militari dare? — *Cic. de Orat.* ii. 18.

dangers to which their calling exposes them. Of these peccant humors, I will mention but one, namely, self-conceit. Instructors, from their perpetual contact with inferiors, are prone to overrate themselves. If they turn not to arduous studies, they must resemble the men of Shinar, who, living where they saw no mountain, were credulous that their Babel would soon reach heaven. From the neglect of teachers to be ever learning, their name because synonymous with *pedant*; they were satirized on the stage, according to Bacon,\* as monkey kings, or "apes of tyrants;" and their magisterial airs may become so confirmed, as to still prompt them to fantastic tricks, when they first come into view of the great objects, which are suited to correct their malady. One such self-magnifying knight of the ferule, I saw last year at Niagara, having a daguerreotype taken, in which he himself figured in the foreground, as more colossal than the world-famous cataract, and bestriding it like an over-arching rainbow.†

Teachers need more knowledge, not only to deepen their feeling that they know little, but to give more *permanence* to their calling. It is notorious, what a transitional and thoroughfare occupation teaching has been. So small has been its wages, and so low has been its social position, that those who betook themselves to it, have had reason to regard it as a temporary make-shift, or a ladder to something

\* Works, vol. i., page 167.

† Perhaps the force of pedantry can go no further than in the case of a grammar schoolmaster two centuries ago, who had a portrait painted of himself standing before a crucifix, while the following words were written on a scroll proceeding out of his mouth :

"Domine Jesu Christe amas me?"

On another speaking scroll which went out of the mouth of him who hung on the cross was inscribed the following answer :

"Clarissime, nobilissime, et doctissime domine Magister Seeger, rector scholæ Wittenbergensis meritissime atque dignissime, omnino amo te!"—ENCYC. AM. Article, *Ceremonial*.



higher, which they turned their backs on as soon as possible, "scorning the base degrees by which they did ascend," and hastening from them as boys, (before going out by instalments came into vogue,) used to burst forth from a country school at its close. Now might not teachers, as a body, be as much superior to what they are, as they are superior to those, who stood in their places a century ago? Yet if they would but thus magnify their office, they would extort for it such emolument, and such estimation, as right early to make it a life-long profession, — a homestead and no longer a lodging-place of way-faring men, who turn aside to tarry for a night, — a profession, which, whoever should leave, would look back to as wistfully, as our travellers in Europe look homeward. Such a consummation may it be yours to see, and then may you live a good while after that!

The incentives to culture, which I have now presented, since it is in our power, fits us for our duties, promotes our advancement, is so noble an end, forms the basis of a genuine aristocracy, brings into the only real communion with the inspirations of genius, and more especially is promoted by the teacher's school-duties, his alternate leisure and employment, and demanded by the present position of his calling, as more elevated than ever before, but subjecting to new difficulties, and bidding its children to shun its besetting sins, raise the literary character of teaching, and establish it as a fourth profession; these incentives must commend themselves to every teacher's conscience, reason and self-love. These incentives are jewels which, though they have been twenty years before some of you, have never lost their lustre. They will inflame you, as a body, with becoming ardor. Among your pupils, your own example will strengthen all your laws. You will be among them, as the golden fruit of the orange-tree in social sweetness on the self-same

bough with blossoms and buds. You will look on your every-day task — “the drilled dull lesson,” — not as a drudgery, but as Johnson styled the vats and barrels in Thrale’s London brewery, “the potentiality of growing rich beyond the dreams of avarice.”\* Your culture will so react upon the children in your charge, that however high they may rise, and however far they may travel, they will, in all glorious hours of crowded life, reverence you as authors of their true being, — a being, one hour of which is worth an age without a name. Among them, there may be one like Klopstock, who, at the height of his fame, ceased not to strew flowers on his teacher’s grave; another, who shall pay you such an immortalizing tribute as Daniel Webster † last year paid to Master Tappan, “teacher of his infant years;” and another like that prince of London merchants, George Peabody, who had no instruction, save in the common schools in the town of my residence, and who this very year has given us, in aid of educating the many, a donation, which would more than found a college professorship.‡ If yours be but a primary or infant

\* Boswell, vol. ii. page 288.

† Works, vol. i. xxi.

‡ George Peabody was born in Danvers, Mass., February 17, 1795; and according to his own words, “in a very humble house in the South Parish, and from the common schools of that Parish, such as they were in 1803 to 1807, he obtained the limited education his parents’ means could afford; but to the principles there inculcated in childhood and early youth he owes much of his success.” His manhood was spent in Baltimore till 1836, when he removed to London, where he has ever since resided. A centennial celebration being held in his native town, June 16, 1852, Mr. Peabody sent a sealed sentiment to be opened and read in the midst of the public dinner. The sentiment was,

“EDUCATION— a debt from the present to future generations.”

Then followed this sentence :

“In acknowledgment of the payment of that debt by the generation which preceded me in my native town, and to aid in its prompt future discharge, I give to the inhabitants of that town the sum of TWENTY THOUSAND DOLLARS for the promotion of knowledge and

school, you will remember that an error there, must be most baneful, cursing as it were like original sin; you will emulate Wesley's mother, who taught him his alphabet for the twentieth time, that she might not prove to have taught it nineteen times in vain; you will not despise such an epitaph, as that graven on the head-stone of one,\* who was thirty-three years an elementary teacher in my neighborhood, namely, "I taught little children to read." You that have out-travelled the remotest of Homer's heroes, Ulysses, to reach this classic city, will carry home from it richer spoils than the palace of Priam could yield. You that, like the Grecian Helen on the walls of Ilium, have gazed on the keen encounter of educational wits, — in this our palaestra, as it were the conflict of Paris and Menelaus, — will, like her, return to the land of your nativity wiser, and, even, in the afternoon of your best days, still bewitching old men and young; or, what is better, instructing them. Coming up to convocations such as this Institute, you shall more and more resemble pilgrims up different sides of the same mountain, who draw nearer not only to each other, but to the sun-girt temple upon its summit, and the far-reaching prospects it commands. Nay, if all your reunions shall add such a precious seeing to your eyes, as some of the lectures and discussions here seem able to minister, you will give more credibility than it has ever had, to the Popish

morality among them," &c. &c. The sequel of the letter showed the donor's purpose to be, that his bounty should be expended in rearing a convenient building, storing it with a library, and making it vocal with popular lectures. While so few millionaires know the true uses of wealth, who can survey without admiration this insatiable benevolence which, in the language of Burke, "not contented with reigning in the dispensation of happiness during the contracted term of human life, strains with all the reachings and graspings of a vivacious mind, to extend the dominion of its bounty beyond the limits of nature, and to perpetuate itself through generations of generations, as the guardian, the protector and the nourisher of mankind?"

\* Benjamin Gill, of Danvers, Mass.

dogma, that an assemblage of *fallible* bishops no sooner meets in œcumenical conclave, than, presto, it is forthwith transfigured into an *infallible* council. History, which has been said to have no margin for the school-mistress, shall tell of you to latest times, as those, the scenes of whose humble toils, illustrious foreigners resort to, when they would find where our great strength lieth; as reaching many, whom the clergy cannot reach, as securing the enlightened exercise of republican franchises, as our cheap but impregnable defence against English poor rates, as making us to differ from the Sardinians, who are forced to fill buildings, which you would mistake for school-houses lurking by lonely ways, with gend'armes for guarding their roads, as turning to healing waters the dead sea of immigrations, whose proud waves nought could stay; and as much more excellent than all the ministers of justice, by so much, as prevention is better than cure, or as a light-house, which preserves from shipwreck, is more to be desired than a life-boat, which rescues a remnant of the crew.

Such is the prospective march of the educational host. It rises before me like the army of Napoleon, when its van had gained the crest of the Alpine St. Bernard, and the queen of Italian valleys burst upon their ravished gaze.

But who shall be a lingering laggard? What Achan is there in the camp? Who shall have no right, portion, or memorial in coming conquests? Who of you will give ear to ignoble ease and peaceful sloth? Who shall be seen to desert his ranks, or who shall slink away unperceived? While all others bring their offering of culture, who can bear to be found empty-handed?

He that shall thus throw down the rod of opportunity and incentive that is put into his hand, shall see it becoming a serpent from whose fangs he will vainly flee. If ours were a prophet's eye to detect that one recreant in this throng, well might we weep

over him, as the austere prophet wept over Hazael, prince of Syria. Nay, rather let us thank God that we are not tormented before the time of recognising him, who shall throw away the key of knowledge. Let us each make it as sure as we can, that there will be no such traitor to his trust, by daily asking, "*Is it I?*"—assured that each of us is a keeper of but *one single man*, that we can each make sure of him, and, that if we each make sure of him, all will be well.

" Let each  
His adamantine coat gird well, and each  
Fit well his helm, gripe fast his orb'd shield  
Borne even or high."











INCENTIVES

TO

MENTAL CULTURE

AMONG

TEACHERS.

Doce ut discas.

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